GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:5621
ANSWERED ON:29.08.2001
VITAMIN A SUPPLEMENTATION
SURESH RAMRAO JADHAV (PATIL)

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have reviewed the policy of Vitamin A Supplementation recently;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the impact on children of two doses of Vitamin A Supplementation?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA)

(a)to(c): Government had organised a National Consultation with experts on benefits and Safety of Administration of Vitamin A to Pre-school children and Pregnant and Lactating Women in September, 2000. The Consultation, inter-alia, concluded that the magnitude of clinical Vitamin A deficiency has declined significantly in the country but exists in scattered pockets. It was recommended that the current practice of administering five doses of Vitamin A to children between the age of 9 months and 3 years should be continued. It was recommended that pregnant/lactating women with symptoms of night blindness should be treated with appropriate doses of Vitamin A. For sustainable elimination of Vitamin A deficiency, production and consumption of Vitamin A rich foods must be strongly promoted in the community, particularly among pregnant and lactating women and children. The consultation recommended that administration of Vitamin A should not be linked with campaigns like the Pulse Polio Immunization. Instead, alternative approaches may be adopted for improving Vitamin A coverage.
Extensive clinical and field trials conducted earlier by the Indian Council of Medical Research`s National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad indicated that 2,00,000 IU of Vitamin A in oil miscible form, when given orally to children between 1-5 years of age, not only prevented keratomalacia but also reduced the prevalence of Bitot Spots by as much as 75 per cent. A large five-year longitudinal field trial, covering over 60,000 children from the slum areas of Hyderabad and Secunderabad, reveals that six monthly administration of massive oral doses of Vitamin A brings down the incidence of corneal xerophthalmia by 80 per cent. Repeat surveys of National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau conducted in the same villages of 8 States indicated that there is a decline in the prevalence of Bitot`s Spots in preschool children from 1.8 per cent in 1975-79 to 0.7 per cent in 1996-97.